

Penalty keeps Blues in touch

WYCOMBE clawed their way back into the Berger Isthmian League title race — but left it desperately late before beating struggling Hendon at Claremont Road on Saturday, writes MICHAEL KNOX.

Only six minutes remained when Steve Long, brought on as substitute, was tripped as he attempted to make a quick turn inside the penalty area.

Referee Mike Topping at first awarded a free-kick but the linesman pointed out that the offence had taken place inside the area — so the result was a spot-kick.

Before the match it had been agreed that George Borg, with a 100 per cent success rate from two kicks this season, would take the penalties.

Atrocious

However, when the big moment came he declined and Howard Kennedy, the regular taker until struck down by injury, did the honours by firing a fierce shot under Hendon's goalkeeper Frank Smart.

But for that penalty and the fact that games last only 90 minutes, the teams would probably still be trying to score the first goal of a match played in atrocious conditions.

If a gale force crosswind was not enough, the teams

Hendon 0, Wycombe 1

had to contend with a rutted uneven pitch and a thus unpredictable bounce — conditions in which the Wanderers normally struggle.

They did so again, but at least this time they kept battling away until the break fell in their favour. Following their two successive defeats by Slough, this was a critical win, especially considering that it was their last league for three weeks.

Because of a hand injury suffered at work, goalkeeper Chris Way was unavailable, so Gary Lester, with his new skinhead haircut, took over. Otherwise the side that started the match, was the

same that finished the second encounter with Slough.

From the outset it was clear that this could be no normal game of football. The irregular bounce and the unpredictable flight of the ball in the air made it a day for 'hit and hope'.

Wycombe's best chance of the first half fell to Mick Holifield, Gary Toll who enjoyed one of his better games, laid the ball into Holifield's path but the close range shot was blocked on the line.

The home side, playing in front of a pitifully small crowd, disturbed Wycombe by bringing on substitute

Paul Currie — brother of Tony — and changing to a 4-4-2 formation.

This confused Wycombe for a while and Currie, himself had the best chance of the match to date on the hour when he found himself with only the 'keeper to beat. But Lester rushed off his line quickly to avert the danger.

Wycombe were finding the going tough and several players were below par, including Mick Holifield who was replaced midway through the second half. Jimmy Jacobs moved to the left side of mid-field, allowing Long to play on the right.

Long made an immediate impact with an early ball into the penalty area which Terry Glynn headed wide. But it was on the left side of the penalty area that he forced the Hendon defender into that vital error that decided the result.

Terry Scott, playing up-front, did not enjoy the happiest of games. It does seem that Scott and Toll perform too similar roles to be playing in the same side. The forward line lacked width, something that Long was able to give when he came on.

HENDON: F. Smart; J. Cansick, G. Hand, P. Deadman, A. Campbell, P. Anderson, D. Drummy, W. Whyte, J. Baker, J. McGleish, P. Shodeinde (sub: P. Currie 51 mins).

WYCOMBE: G. Lester; P. Birdseye, G. Borg, K. Mead, S. Hardwick, H. Kennedy, J. Jacobs, G. Toll, T. Glynn, T. Scott, M. Holifield (sub: S. Long 72 mins).

Referee: M. Topping (Hampshire).
Half-time: 0-0. **Scorer:** Wycombe — Kennedy (pen 84 mins).

One point behind

WYCOMBE'S victory against Hendon kept them in third spot just one point behind the top two clubs Enfield and Slough.

While Enfield were earning their creditable draw against Port Vale in the F.A. Cup, Slough were drawing level on points with a 1-0 home win against Boreham Wood. A penalty by Barry Friend was all that separated the sides.

Slough must now be firm favourites for the title with four games in hand on their nearest challengers. But any team in the top four could take the championship.

BERGER ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Enfield	30	15	8	7	58	35	53
Slough	26	15	8	3	41	22	53
Wycombe	30	15	7	8	54	36	52
Sutton	29	14	9	6	53	40	51
Harrow	29	14	6	9	46	31	48
Dagenham	30	12	9	9	57	48	45
Bromley	29	12	8	9	50	46	44
Dulwich	29	11	10	8	47	39	43
Leytonstone	26	12	6	8	48	38	42
*Barking	34	11	9	14	46	56	40
Staines	30	10	7	13	38	41	37
Hayes	28	11	4	13	23	36	37
Tooting	31	10	5	16	33	40	35
Woking	31	10	4	17	32	49	34
Leatherhead	31	7	12	12	23	34	33
Carshalton	28	10	3	15	38	54	33
Boreham Wd	27	8	8	11	34	44	32
Harlow	26	7	10	9	32	38	31
Walthamstow	28	9	4	15	29	45	31
Croydon	26	5	14	7	22	24	29
Hendon	26	7	7	12	33	41	28
Hitchin	24	7	6	11	31	31	27

*2 points deducted.